

Basic Principles of Teaching Adults

This is about **how we teach** not what we teach

Most groups will have varying levels of experience in the subject area, and a range of learning styles and they are there because they have a desire to learn what you are teaching. One of the key roles of the teacher is to keep that desire alive as they learn

Remember they are motivated and they have chosen to be here. They want to learn even if they have no idea what is involved

At the Beginning:

- Be clear about outcomes/objectives, both for this session and overall
- Be clear about your methods, eg there will be homework each week, there will be information given along with handouts etc
- Be clear about where you want them to be at the end of each session (your objective), eg you will know . . . You will understand . . . Put the objective clearly somewhere, so at the end of the lesson you can check that it has been met
- Start where they are – don't presume any knowledge. Tell them they may feel overwhelmed – this is quite normal and not to worry about it or think it means you are hopeless. For many people they may not have been in a learning environment for many years (or even decades).
- Give explicit permission to ask questions – remind them there is no such thing as a stupid question
- Involve them -
- Personalise things – tell some of your own story or experiences
- Don't talk too much. Even auditory learners need as much time to speak as to listen
- Make sure there is integration from lesson to lesson
- Watch language we use – don't use words which are specific to your field and not generally understood without explaining them
- Mix the group up so they sit with different people or in different places each session.

Learning Styles

Talk to them about different learning styles and encourage them to do their own notes/diagrams etc that work for them. Explain that some people will take notes and others won't. Everyone will learn differently and their challenge is to find the way that works for them

Visual learners – like images

Kinaesthetic learners – like tactile representations of information. They will be the most keen to get started doing something and will learn by doing that

Auditory learners – they will learn through listening and speaking. They will use repetition as a study technique (like learning times tables)

Read & write learners – they will read lots and take notes

Make sure that your teaching style isn't just geared to people who learn the way you do

- Incorporate exercises and strategies that will include all learning styles

When Presenting Information

1. tell 'em (what you are going to tell them)
2. tell 'em
3. tell 'em (what you have told them)

Remember there are four levels of competence.

1. unconscious knowing (you no longer have to think about it – you just do it instinctively)
2. conscious knowing (you have the knowledge but it is not instinctive)
3. conscious unknowing (you know there is a whole lot you don't know)
4. unconscious unknowing (you don't know what you don't know)

If you are at level 1 in your skill area, you will need to make a conscious effort to go back to level 2 when you are teaching as this is the level from which you can explain things.

At the End:

Summarise the session (tell 'em what you told 'em)

Explain any homework

Tell them what is happening next week (tell 'em what you are going to tell 'em)

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